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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001258

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SADR CITY SHEIKHS EXPRESS INTEREST IN SOI IN ORDER
TO FINISH JAM

Classified By: Classified by Baghdad 3 EPRT Team Leader Theodore H. Andrews, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Baghdad 3 EPRT Team Leader and the 3BCT/4th ID Commander met on April 19, 2008 with five leading tribal sheikhs from Sadr City. During the course of a cordial two and a half hour meeting and lunch, the sheikhs:

-- Expressed strong interest in launching a SOI program in the Jamilla and Thawra 1 sections of Sadr City, but insisted that the USG underwrite the effort and that a senior Iraqi officer serve as the program's public face;

-- Called for an all out military effort to eliminate JAM , urging coalition forces to envelop Sadr City by beginning an attack from the northeast; and

-- Made clear that they thought any reconstruction effort would not be effective at this time, but noted the need for humanitarian assistance and employment generating projects.

The U.S. side briefed on the continuing military operations, and urged the sheikhs to participate actively in the reconstruction/redevelopment effort that will follow completion of the Sadr City barrier access project. Both sides agreed to meet again on April 26. End summary.

¶2. (U) Participants:

Iraqi

-- Sheikh Jalil Mohammad Al-Badaiy (Al-Sawaed Tribe)
-- Sheikh Mohammed Jakhair Mutlak (Al-Izerij Tribe)
-- Sheikh Kadhém Fares Al-Mizban (Al-Sawaed and Al-Teeran Tribes)
-- Sheikh Chaseb Moolah Khaleefah (Al-Bineiter Tribe)
-- Sheikh Kadhém Sahen Eissa (Al-Tameem Tribe)

U.S.

-- Mr. Andrews, Baghdad 3 ePRT Team Leader
-- COL Hort, 3rd BCT Commander
-- COL Chimienti, Baghdad 3 ePRT Deputy Leader.

Location: Iraq Army Headquarters Building, Old Ministry of Defense Complex, Baghdad

¶3. (SBU) Note: This meeting followed several attempts thwarted by various contingencies, including movement restrictions out of Sadr City, and the April 12 meeting between the sheikhs and senior Iraqi government officials. The sheikhs indicated that four of their colleagues were unable to attend the meeting at the last minute. They promised to inform them of the meeting's results. Sheikh Jalil Mohammad Al-Badaiy did most of the talking for the Iraqis. End note.

¶4. (C) The meeting opened with a detailed discussion of current military operations in Sadr City, and the Sheikh's views on JAM and its membership. Saying that the vast majority of Sadr City residents opposed JAM, Sheikh Al-Badaiy said the group had roughly 4,000 followers in Sadr City. Only about a third of the group was trained to fight. He and the other sheikhs were particularly scornful of Moqtada al Sadr. At various times in the discussion, they belittled his intelligence or sneered at his leadership abilities.

¶5. (C) Although the sheikhs said they had rejected an appeal by senior Iraqi officials to designate about 300 people to serve as a local security force in Sadr City, the sheikhs expressed keen interest in the idea of a Sons of Iraq program in the Jamilla and Thawra 1 sections of Sadr City. They believed they could identify up to 500 names for the program within a week to ten days. All the candidates would be residents of the area.

¶6. (C) Several of the sheikhs emphasized the importance of U.S. funding. They did not believe the GOI would provide any funds, let alone regular payments. That said, the group agreed that an Iraqi had to be involved with any disbursement. They specifically rejected MOI involvement, but named several figures associated with the MOI as potential program sponsors.

¶7. (C) The U.S. side noted that the SOI was not a panacea for all that ailed Iraq. Within six months, the volunteers would find themselves directed toward conventional careers in the Interior or Defense Ministries. The sheikhs accepted this

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news without comment.

Call for All Out War/Humanitarian Update

¶8. (C) The Iraqi side issued several blood chilling demands for an all out effort to smash the JAM and, by extension, Al Sadr. If necessary, they claimed themselves ready to sacrifice 500,000 Sadr City residents if that was what it took to eliminate JAM. Bombing the Office of the Martyr Sadr's office in Sadr City was another idea they proposed. More practically, several of the sheikhs called for an aggressive effort to pay for information about senior JAM leaders.

¶9. (C) When asked about the wall now under construction, they said they understood its purpose, but worried about the impact on other parts of Sadr City. It would be useful, they argued, to attack from the northeast, thereby squeezing the JAM fighters in the central part of Sadr City. The sheikhs wondered about recent reports that Moqtada al Sadr would order the dissolution of JAM if the rival Badr Organization were also disbanded.

¶10. (C) The sheikhs claimed that reconstruction was useless under present circumstances, but called for humanitarian assistance in areas where possible. They thought electricity, trash, and sewage removal were the most important jobs now. Several of the sheikhs said they were not aware of the Iraqi Army's distribution efforts in parts of Thawra 1.

¶11. (C) Comment. The sheikhs were scornful of the Iraqi government, which they thought was more corrupt and ineffective than Saddam's. At the same time, they were fully supportive of the idea that the elected government should be in full control of the country's streets. This attitude reflected their sense that they should be bigger players in running the country, and disdain for the upstart Moqtada al

Sadr. We agreed to meet again on April 26. End comment.
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